
Controlling time is power:

An analysis of filmic metaphors in the Lotus
advertisement «Shine»

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I. Abstract

Generally speaking, when talking about metaphors, the first thing that comes to our minds is that they are figures of speech whose main aim is to embroider and beautify the meaning of any literary text. Although this is partly true, metaphors are not just figures of speech. According to Forceville (2016b), they are presented as tools which help us noticing the surrounding world. From a cognitive linguistic view, a metaphor is defined as a tool which helps us understand one conceptual domain in terms of another (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Originally, metaphors were exclusively explored within the realm of language; however, afterwards, a great bulk of research proved that their examination was fruitful from other perspectives.

Metaphors might be presented in one or more modes of communication (i.e. monomodal or multimodal metaphors). It is likely to find research devoted to analyse metaphors in still pictures (Forceville, 2016b), in newspaper cartoons (El-Refaie 2003), or even in TV commercials (Forceville 2007). However, little attention has been paid to the identification and analysis of metaphors in moving pictures; in consequence, the main aim of the present paper is to show the application of FilmMip (Filmic Metaphor Identification Procedure, Bort-Mir in prep.) on a very well-known brand TV commercial. FilmMip is an analytical method which is divided into several steps that allow us to identify filmic metaphors from an empirical point of view.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor theory (CMT), multimodal metaphor, filmic metaphor, FilmMip.

II. Theoretical background

In Cognitive Linguistics, a metaphor is defined as «understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another» (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 5). With this claim, the authors try to explain that abstract concepts can be understood in terms of more concrete terms with the use of metaphors (Kövecses 2008). Examples of that are when we say our relationship is going nowhere or we have come a long way together; that is, when we use the concept of journey to talk about the concept of love.

In 1980, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson proposed an insight into the theory of metaphors. The first and foremost concern of the conceptual metaphor theory (henceforth CMT) was to defend that mind as well as reason are innately embodied in our experiences (Lakoff and Johnson 1999). Therefore, people think in terms of

metaphors and automatically associate abstract to concrete concepts, already experienced via our senses (Forceville 2016a).

Regardless of the success enjoyed by CMT, its central claims were focused on the concept that metaphors occurred solely verbally. However, further studies demonstrated that they could also occur non-verbally (Forceville 1996, Grady 2007) and multimodally (Forceville 2016a). In order to work on the difference between monomodal and multimodal metaphors, the definition of mode should be clarified. A mode refers to «a sign system interpretable because of a specific perception process» (Forceville 2007, 6). Accordingly, we can differentiate monomodal and multimodal metaphors. On the one hand, monomodal metaphors are those in which the source and target domains are depicted in just one single mode. On the other hand, multimodal metaphors occur when the source and target are generally represented in more than one mode, i.e. one mode for the source domain and a different one for the target domain (Coëgnarts and Kravanja 2012a, Forceville 2016a).

Forceville (2006) already suggested that metaphors can also occur in films, not only in language or pictures; and some studies on the multimodality of metaphors in cinema have already been initiated (Forceville 2016b). The multimodality of metaphors in films can be easily conveyed since different modes such as sound, music or moving images may be involved. Therefore, a film is «a multimodal medium par excellence, as it can draw on several modes» (Forceville 2016b, 4).

Among all the necessary elements to create a filmic metaphor, the use of visuals plays an outstanding role because it is what gives meaning to the film discourse (Forceville 2007). Some essential components can be underscored such as lights (Forceville and Renckens 2013), sounds or songs (Ortiz 2014), camera movements, lines of dialogues, special cuts (Coëgnarts and Kravanja 2012b), and kinetics (Rossolatos 2016).

All these elements of cinema, all these technical choices that the filmmaker portrays onto the filmic text, are considered to be of great importance in the filmic meaning-making and, as a consequence, in the construction and later perception and understanding of the cinematographic metaphors. As Forceville (2007, 16) states: «the author usually wants a certain combination of perceptual elements to be understood as a metaphor».

Additionally, in film as well as in written discourse, three important questions should be answered so as to identify that something is a metaphor (Forceville 2002, 2-3). These three questions are:

(1) Which are the two terms of a metaphor and how do we know?



(2) Which is the metaphor target domain, source domain and how do we know?

(3) Which features can be mapped from the source domain to the target domain and how is their selection decided upon?

III. Aims

The main aim of the present paper is to apply Filmip, a metaphor identification method, to a real TV commercial in order to identify the existence of metaphors. A TV spot from a very well-known brand TV commercial is analysed with the application of the aforementioned method (Lotus Watches 2017). The commercial has been selected due to the apparently paramount discordance of some of its elements. It has been considered to be worth applying Filmip so as to test its validity.

IV. Method

The analytical method Filmip (Filmic Metaphor Identification Procedure, Bort-Mir in prep.) has been used for this study. Filmip is a method divided into seven different steps that allow us to identify filmic metaphors from an empirical point of view, and prevent us from giving an interpretation based on mere intuition. Filmip has been constructed on the basis of another method for visual metaphor identification in still pictures, VisMip (Šorm and Steen 2018); thus, we may state that Filmip is the dynamic version of VisMip. In this seven-step method, we have to, first, describe the narrative discourse of the filmic texts by segmenting the advertisement in the smallest units of analysis, identify the modes, attach abstract meaning. Then, we need to structure the referential description (Tam and Leung 2001), find the incongruities and integrate them by comparisons, test if the comparisons are cross-domain, and test if the comparison is depicted as some kind indirect discourse about the topic. Finally, if the last steps are positive we will annotate the filmic text for metaphor.

V. Results

Step 1. Establishing a general understanding

Step 1a) Description of the referential meaning

1a.1. Content assessment

1a.2. Identification of sequences, scenes and shots (using Movie Maker)

1a.3. Identification and description of modes

The commercial has been divided into 1 sequence, 12 scenes, and 17 shots.



Figure 1. Aerial view of New York (Source: *Lotus «Shine»*)
(00:00:00 - 00:05:27: aerial shot)

Modes:

- Written discourse [Lotus (capital letters, white)], presents (small capital letters, white), Shine (capital letters, white)]
- Music [*Shine*, no lyrics yet, pop music, non-diegetic, composed]
- Visuals [colours (pale pink, blue, soft grey), Kinematic elements (aerial view of the setting, slow camera movement)]

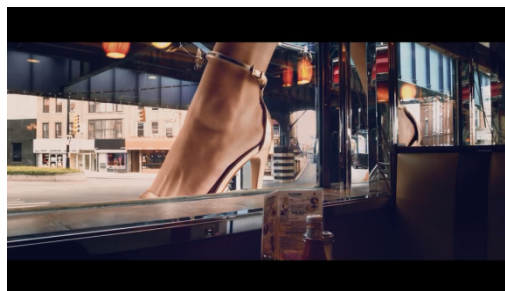


Figure 2. Foot in front of a shop window (Source: *Lotus «Shine»*)
(00:05:28 - 00:07:80: long shot)

Modes:

- Music [continuum]
- Visuals [colours (gold, grey), salient objects (heel)]



Figure 3. Woman passing next to a bridge (Source: *Lotus «Shine»*)
(00:07:81 - 00:10:53: long shot)

Modes:

- Music [continuum]
- Visuals [colours (pale pink and black) salient object (watch)]



Figure 4. Woman walking in a street (Source: *Lotus «Shine»*)
(00:10:54 - 00:13:03: full shot)

Modes:

- Written discourse [Starring (small capital letters, white) Megan Fox (capital letters, white)]
- Music [*Shine*, lyrics «Golden heartbeats»]
- Visuals [colours (pale pink and grey), kinematic elements (vertical view) gestures & facial expression (firm steps)]



Figure 5. Woman turning around a building (Source: *Lotus «Shine»*)
(00:13:04 - 00:15:30: aerial shot)

Modes:

- Music [*Shine*, lyrics «stolen by a heart thief»]
- Visuals [colours (pale pink, grey and gold) gestures & facial expression (she leans on a building and turns on it)]



Figure 6. Woman lying on a rooftop (Source: *Lotus «Shine»*)
(00:15:31 - 00:16:53: full shot)

Modes:

- Music [*Shine*, lyrics «kept»]
- Visuals [colours (pale pink, soft blue, soft grey), salient objects (watch, eyes and lips), kinematic elements (front horizontal view), gestures & facial expression (she stares at the camera)]



Figure 7. Woman lying on Central Park, in New York (Source: *Lotus «Shine»*)
(00:16:53 - 00:18:53: aerial shot)

Modes:

- Music [*Shine*, lyrics «(kept) inside an hourglass»]
- Visuals [colours (pale pink, soft grey, blue and green), kinematic elements (aerial- view), gestures & facial expressions (seductive pose looking at the camera)]

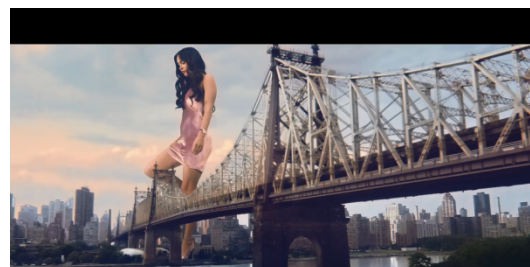


Figure 8. Woman passing over a bridge (Source: *Lotus «Shine»*)
(00:18:54 - 00:19:93: long shot)

Modes:

- Music [*Shine*, lyrics «it»]
- Visuals [colours (pale pink, soft grey, soft blue), kinematic elements (horizontal-down view)]

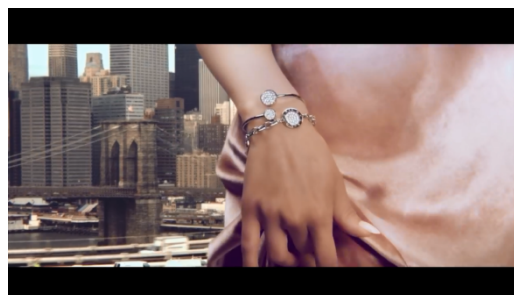


Figure 9. Arm of a woman with a bracelet (Source: *Lotus «Shine»*)
(00:19:94 - 00:21:17: close up shot)

Modes:

- Music [*Shine*, lyrics «(it) marks the»]
- Visuals [colours (pale pink), salient objects (bracelet), gestures & facial expression (lifts her dress)]

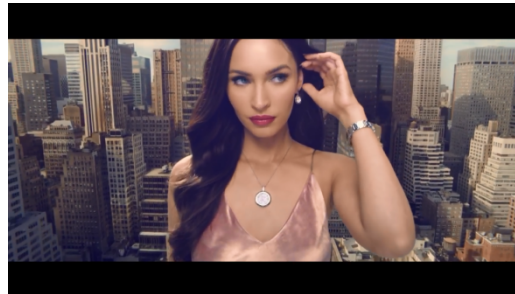


Figure 10. Woman looking at the right (Source: *Lotus «Shine»*)
(00:21:17 - 00:24:63: medium shot)

Modes:

- Music [*Shine*, lyrics «(the) breath of the nighttime»]
- Visuals [colours (pale pink, soft grey, blue), salient objects (watch, necklace, earrings), gestures & facial expressions (down look, touches her hair, looks at her left side)]

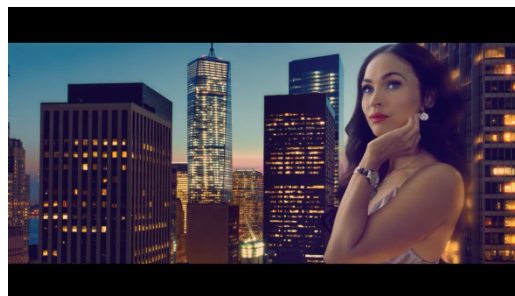


Figure 11. Woman leaning on a building (Source: *Lotus «Shine»*)
(00:24:64 - 00:26:17: medium shot)

Modes:

- Music [*Shine*]
- Visuals [colours (pale pink, gold, grey), salient objects (watch, earrings and necklace), gestures & facial expression (touches her neck)]



Figure 12. Man touching his jacket (Source: *Lotus «Shine»*)
(00:26:18 - 00:27:50: american shot)

Modes:

- Music [continuum]
- Visuals [colours (gold, grey, blue and black), salient objects (watch), gestures & facial expression (seductive gaze)]

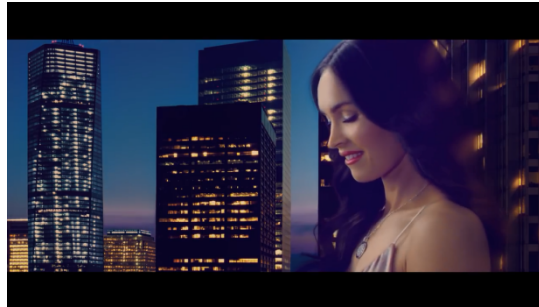


Figure 13. Woman looking down (Source: *Lotus «Shine»*)
(00:27:51 - 00:28:93: medium shot)

Modes:

- Music [continuum]
- Visuals [colours (blue, pale pink and gold), salient objects (earrings and necklace), gestures & facial expression (bites her lips, smiles and looks down)]



Figure 14. Sunrise view of New York with a man and a woman (Source: *Lotus «Shine»*)
(00:28:94 - 00:30:27: long shot)

Modes:

- Music [continuum]
- Visuals [colours (black, gold and orange), kinematic elements (horizontal view)]

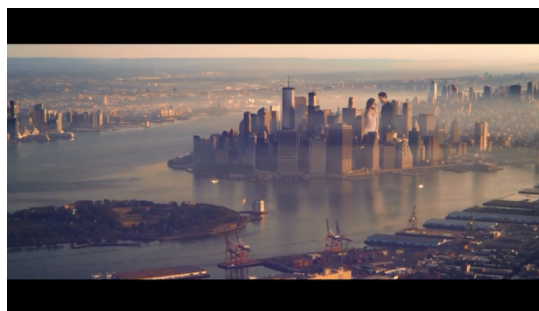


Figure 15. View of Manhattan (Source: *Lotus «Shine»*)

(00:30:28 - 00:32:13: aerial shot)

Modes:

- Music [continuum]
- Visuals [colours (pale pink, soft blue and soft grey), kinematic elements (aerial view of the setting)]



Figure 16. Hand of a woman touching a building (Source: *Lotus «Shine»*)
(00:32:14 - 00:34:17: close up shot)

Modes:

- Music [continuum]
- Visuals [colours (pale pink and gold), salient objects (watch), gestures & facial expressions (touches the building with her hand as if playing seductively)]

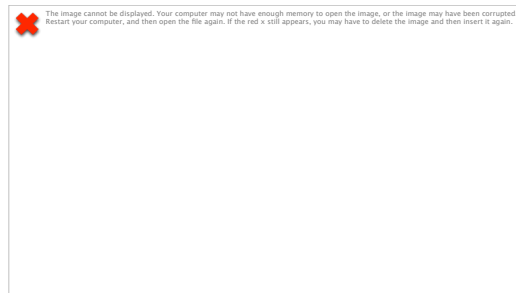


Figure 17. Hoarding with the products of Lotus (Source: *Lotus «Shine»*)
(00:34:17 - 00:40:00: long shot)

Modes:

- Written discourse [Lotus (capital letters, white), lotus-watches.com (small capital letters, white)]
- Spoken discourse [«Lotus» (voice-off, woman, soft)]
- Music [continuum]
- Visuals [colours (pale pink, blue, soft grey, silver), salient objects (watches and bracelets), kinematic elements (rapid camera movement, brakes with the logo), images & icons (hoarding, lotus logo, Facebook and Instagram logos).

1a.4. Description of the referential meaning

Woman walking in a city and wearing jewellery, then she meets a boy and the like and seduce each other

Step 1b) Attaching more general and abstract meaning

We can notice in this commercial that there appear some salient objects which are introduced by close-up shots and they are the products advertised. Therefore, the watches and some jewellery (necklace, earrings and bracelets) can be easily identified. The watches are likely to represent time (which is uncontrollable), and the jewels might try to represent power (jewels have always been appreciated as a symbol of wealth and sometimes reinforce the image of the person who wears them; therefore, a person who wears expensive jewels is a person who has money, which is a quality of rich people and thus powerful). The characters on the advertisement wear the products, so they are represented as powerful people. Moreover, this power is deepened by some shots; for instance in the fourth shot there is a full shot with vertical view of Megan Fox which may represent her as an authoritative character. Then, in shot 9 the watch is shown and the facial expression of the woman is serious. She has a seductive gaze which shows strength and power and she also touches her hair timidly. Finally, in scene 9, the man and the woman appear. They look at each other in a seductive way. The girl bites her lips and moves her head down.

The colours are also to be taken into consideration. The predominant colours (pale pink, soft blue, soft grey and gold) are likely to represent femininity and love, fantasy, value, money, luxury or even happiness. Then, there are some instances of black colour which may represent elegance.

The song is talking about time. If we take the lyrics into account, we can notice some important keywords in order to understand it. First of all, there appear the word 'heartbeats', which can be acknowledged as the tic toc of clocks. Also 'heart thief' is paramount, since he/she is the person who steals and controls the heartbeats, and as the heartbeats are attached to the concept of time (tic toc of watches), we may say that the song is symbolically talking about someone who is able to control time (and thus, a person who controls time is a powerful person). Therefore, it may give clues to point the characters as the time-controllers.

We previously stated that the watches represent time and the jewellery might represent power. If we see the whole commercial, we notice that the characters are two good-looking giants who are playing with the city, and are seducing each other. According to these facts, they seem to be Gods since the products, the lyrics and the final image that gets inside the hoarding strengthen the feeling that they might be Gods.

Step 1c) Reconstructing the message

The commercial might be trying to convey the idea that the characters are able to control time and to be powerful with the



watches and jewels. Therefore, the intended message seems to be that we can be powerful by wearing these watches and jewels.

Step 1d) Deriving the topic

Topic: watches and jewels

Step 2. Structure the referential description under step 1a.4

Shot 1: Aerial view of New York City

[Setting (New York City)]

Shot 2: Woman walking on a street

[Agent (woman) Action (walk) Object (heel) Setting (street)]

Shot 3: Woman walking next to a bridge

[Agent (continuum) Action (continuum) Object (watch) Setting (continuum)]

Shot 4: Woman walking in the middle of a street

[Agent (continuum) Action (continuum) Setting (continuum)]

Shot 5: Woman turning around a skyscraper

[Agent (continuum) Action (turn around) Setting (New York)]

Shot 6: Woman lying on a rooftop

[Agent (continuum) Action (lay) Object (watch) Setting (rooftop)]

Shot 7: Woman lying on Central Park

[Agent (continuum) Action (continuum) Setting (New York, Central Park)]

Shot 8: Woman passing over a bridge

[Agent (continuum) Action (pass) Setting (New York/a bridge)]

Shot 9: Woman walking

[Agent (continuum) Action (walk)]

Shot 10: Woman walking

[Agent (woman) Action (walk) Setting (New York)]

Shot 11: Woman leaning on a skyscraper

[Agent (woman) Action (lean) Setting (New York/skyscraper)]

Shot 12: Man looking at the woman

[Agent (man) Action (look) Object (watch) Setting (New York/skyscraper)]

Shot 13: Woman smiling and looking down
[Agent (woman) Action (smile and look down) Object (jewels)
Setting (New York/ skyscraper)]

Shot 14: Man and woman standing up and looking at each other
[Agent (man and woman) Action (stand up and look) Setting
(New York)]

Shot 15: Man and woman standing up and looking at each other
[Agent (continuum) Action (continuum) Setting (continuum)]

Shot 16: Hand caressing a building
[Agent (hand of woman) Action (caress) Setting (New
York/building)]

Shot 17: Hoarding with the products
[Object (hoarding and products) Setting (New York)]

Step 3. Find incongruous filmic units

3a) Decide for each unit under step 2 whether it is incongruous with the topic as formulated under step 1d.

The Doers of the Action (man and woman) are congruous with the topic (watches and jewellery), however their size is incongruous. The watches and jewels (Objects) are also congruous with the topic.

3b) Decide for each topic-congruous unit whether it shows properties that are incongruous with the properties that are typically true of that unit (property-incongruous)

Man and Woman (Agent) are giants, thus they are depicted as having a property which is uncommon to human beings. The property that we are talking about is called 'External Surface Property' (Wu and Barsalou 2009). The rest of the units, Action, Objects and Setting are congruous.

3c) Decide whether the message under step 1c is communicated in an atypical way of the genre of TV advertising (genre-incongruous)
No.

3d) Decide for each modal element whether it is incongruous with the topic as formulated under step 1d

The elements that we may find incongruous in the commercial are the kinematic elements and the lyrics.

Step 4. Incongruity integrated by some form of comparison

4a) For each unit under step 3a, determine which replacing unit would be congruous with the topic AND would be coherent with the referential meaning of the film

(Setting) The setting is congruous with the topic

(Action) The action is congruous with the topic

(Object) The objects are congruous with the topic

(Agent) The Agents are not congruous with the topic due to its size. They are beautiful and depicted as powerful, like Gods.

4b) For each incongruous unit under step 3b, determine which replacing unit would typically own the incongruous properties AND would be coherent with the referential meaning of the film

External Surface Property (Wu and Barsalou 2009). The size of the characters is not usual at all, they should have been depicted in a typical size. The replacing unit would be the natural size of the characters and the current one is just giving us clues to think that they are Gods. Thus, due to the size of the characters, they can be easily compared to giants. However, in films or books, giants or even trolls have always been depicted as unattractive characters. This is the reason why we can consider that the only entity which possesses the qualities shown in the commercial (beauty, large size, possession of valuable objects, playing with these objects, seduction...) is God.

4c) For each incongruous modal element under step 3d, determine which replacing element would be congruous with the topic

Under step 3d, we found that the kinematic elements as well as the music were incongruent. Therefore, the kinematic elements could be replaced by other gestures related with the topic of the commercial and the song could be replaced by any song related to jewellery and watches.

Step 5. Test whether the comparison (s) is/are cross-domain

According to all the elements analyzed we can compare some elements using Wordnet:

God belonging to the domain of «spiritual being» belief > content» (Wordnet, under seat sense #2).

Time belonging to the domain of «case» happening» event» (Wordnet, under seat sense #1).

Power belonging to the domain of «quality» attribute» abstraction» (Wordnet, under seat sense #1).



As we can observe, the three elements that we compared in the commercial belong to different cognitive domains (proven via Wordnet) . Thus, we can confirm that the comparison is cross-domain, since none of the concepts coincide among them as regards the cognitive domains.

Step 6. Test whether the comparison (s) can be seen as some form of indirect discourse about the topic as formulated under step 1d.

In the commercial, we might understand three main concepts that are compared among each other. These concepts are (i) time, (ii) power, and (iii) being God/Goddess; therefore, elements from the three conceptual domains are mapped to give us clues on the metaphor.

To begin with, there are concepts such as the size of the people, the beauty, or even the romping, which are particularly from the domain of God/Goddess. They are characterized by being eternal, superior and more importantly powerful. According to it, specific features of being a God might be mapped to the concept of Power, such as the ability of controlling things, in this case, the control of time. Consequently, we can think that the size of the characters is bigger than the natural one because they are Gods; and, if they are Gods, they can control time. Moreover, if time can be controlled, it is mainly because they are powerful.

For that reason, the comparison is understood as indirect discourse about the watches.

Step 7. If steps 4, 5 and 6 are positive, mark the commercial for metaphor.

Since steps 4, 5, and 6 are positive, we mark this commercial for metaphor.

VI. Discussion and conclusion

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The main aim of the present study was to show how Filmip is applied to a real TV commercial in order to identify the existence of metaphors. A TV commercial was selected to test and further identify the presence of the trope. As we have observed in the previous analysis, the last step of the method was positive, that is, the commercial has been marked as metaphorical.

On that basis, we provided some conceptual domains in which the metaphor can work; however, metaphor understanding and interpretation must rely on people's own interpretation, since the main idea was to identify the metaphor but not to explain it, or, as Forceville (2014, 197) pointed out: «a metaphor does not necessarily have to be understood, but interpreted».

Metaphor recognition in film discourse could be a difficult task, inasmuch as it may seem complex or confusing. FilMip meets the necessary requirements as a method to be used in order to recognize the trope. Through its use, we find that the TV commercial «Shine» has employed metaphors to present the product. We notice the presence of incongruities through the analysis of modes, which showed us that there is something beyond. Since the characters are depicted in an unusual way (giants), we perceive that they might be seen as Gods who have the power over the things that surrounds them. Therefore, we can state that as long as they are Gods, they possess all the specific properties that Gods may have, being power the most important one.

Power in this commercial appears metaphorically over and over again. According to Rossolatos (2016), advertisers want to anchor the meaning of what they are promoting through the commercials; therefore, they are displaying power through the use of their products. To accomplish that, they make use of visuals and some other relevant elements because, as Grady (1997) pointed out, it is effortless for our cognition to work with concepts which are composed by image contents (cited in Ortiz 2014, 6).

As a general impression, the advertisement shows strength and power, which are achieved by possessing the products. Therefore, the commercial intends to transmit us that by buying the products from Lotus we will be powerful, we will be like Gods.

Thus, considering all the elements that have been analyzed, some metaphors can be proposed for that advertisement, such as BEING GOD IS CONTROLLING TIME OR CONTROLLING TIME IS POWER. However, their interpretation relies on our own knowledge, as «the culture and the environment may affect the understanding of the metaphor» (Forceville 2007, 30).

Along these lines, it is worth mentioning that to understand metaphors and to get all the abstract meaning not only in filmic discourse but in others, we have to stop thinking in concrete aspects (embodied) and move to abstract concepts (disembodied) (Grodal 2009, cited in Coëgnarts and Kravanja 2012b).

Overall, the present analysis covers just one commercial advertisement. Thus, further research is needed with further analyses of more TV commercials in order to widely demonstrate the hypothesis and to give more consistency to the previous findings.

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